REMARKS

Claims 21-31 are pending.

Claims 21-26 and 29-31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being unpatentable over Smith (U.S. Patent No. 6,192,282).

The anticipation rejection is respectfully traversed because Smith does not teach or suggest a system based on an open client-server architecture that features at least one client or user interface and associated messaging control for exchanging messages and communicating with respective messaging control and interface control servers using a common messaging control protocol for controlling a plurality of environmental maintenance equipment, as recited in independent claim 21.[2] As shown in Figure 2 of the patent application, each client or user interface is associated with a respective messaging control, and each interface control server is associated with a corresponding respective messaging control. The respective messaging control and corresponding respective messaging control communicate using the common messaging control protocol for controlling associated environmental maintenance equipment.

The use of the common messaging control protocol is an important contribution to the state of the art. For example, the inventor recognizes in the patent application, page 1, lines 5-

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[2] The common messaging control protocol may include transmission control protocol/Internet protocol (TCP/IP) and text messaging, as recited in dependent claims 2-3. These features are described in the patent application, among other places, in the paragraph bridging pages 3-4.

20, that automatic environment maintenance systems were known in the art. However, the inventor points out in the patent application, page 2, lines 9-11, that these systems have a serious problem in that "there is no mechanism for integrating separate software packages because the devices are 'incompatible' and require different user interfaces." Consequently, "a user must learn to use each software package that controls a device or set of devices." See also the comprehensive discussion on page 2 through page 3, line 5. The invention provides a solution to this problem by providing a system based on the open, client-server architecture using the common messaging control protocol to create custom web browser interfaces to various devices, as described in the patent application, page 3, lines 12-14.

In contrast to the claimed invention, Smith discloses a method and apparatus for building automation having a centralized intelligent home controller 13 (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2B) coupled to various subsystems via different control lines as follows:

1) a light/appliance control 41 (Fig. 2A) via a serial (232) line (see lighting subsystem 21 (Fig. 1));

2) an audio/video control 43 (Fig. 2A) via serial (232), relay, infrared, voice and parallel lines (see entertainment subsystem 25 (Fig. 1));

3) a video distribution 45 (Fig. 2B) via an infrared line (see entertainment subsystem 25 (Fig. 1));

4) communications (PBX/LAN/Intercom) 47 (Fig. 2C) via

digital, DTMF, serial (232) and page audio lines (see communication subsystem 27 (Fig. 1));[3]

5) an environmental (HVAC) 49 (Fig. 2D) via a serial (232) line (see environment and energy subsystem 19 (Fig. 1));

6) a security/fire/safety 51 (Fig. 2D) via a serial (232) line (see security and safety subsystem 17 (Fig. 1)); and

7) a low voltage control 53 (Fig. 2C) coupled via relay, digital and analog lines (see the low voltage device subsystem 21 (Fig. 1).

Moreover, Smith, column 3, lines 13-20, states that: "Each of the building automation subsystems include at least one end device which is subject to control in accordance with a particular control protocol. The plurality of building automation subsystems may individually respond to a relatively large number of **different control protocols** which are generally incompatible." (bold emphasis added). Further, Smith, column 3, lines 29-34, states that: "[E]ach of the plurality of modular subsystem programs is utilized for generating command signals in accordance with a particular control protocol which may be device specific, from a plurality of **available and different control protocols** in the building automation subsystems." (bold emphasis added). In view of this, Smith's controller 13 communicates with each building automation subsystem using **different control protocols**,

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[3] There is also an unspecified line coupling the controller 13 to a LAN cable hub 111 in the communications 47.

unlike the claimed invention where the respective messaging control and corresponding respective messaging control communicate with one another using a common messaging control protocol for controlling associated environmental maintenance equipment, as recited in claim 21. In other words, while Smith's building automation system has some form of centralized control, this centralized control is based on providing corresponding control signals to the different subsystems using **different control protocols**, which is very different than the whole thrust of the claimed invention.

For all these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that Smith does not teach or suggest the claimed invention.

Dependent Claims 27-28

Dependent claims 27-28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Smith in view of Gray (U.S. Patent No. 5,568,402). Dependent claims 27-28 depend from claim 21, contain all the limitations therein, and recite other new and unique features of the claimed invention in relation to Smith such as those discussed above. Moreover, Gray does not make up for the deficiency in teaching of Smith in relation to that discussed above. For all these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the obviousness rejection should be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Conclusion

Reconsideration and early allowance of all the claims is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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